



NEWS

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 24, 2008

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Secretary Kempthorne, Deputy Secretary Scarlett Congratulate Florida on Everglades Announcement

WESTERN PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL – Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne and Deputy Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett today congratulated Governor Charlie Crist, the South Florida Water Management District and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for announcing their commitment to acquire up to 187,000 acres of U.S. Sugar Corporation land to enhance restoration of the Everglades.

In a press conference in West Palm Beach this morning, the Governor and officials of the South Florida Water Management District announced the principles to guide their commitment with U.S. Sugar Corporation to acquire the land. Scarlett represented the Department of the Interior at the event.

“Acquiring this large swath of land south of Lake Okeechobee will be an historic turning point for the largest watershed restoration project in the world,” Secretary Kempthorne said. “Congratulations to Governor Crist and all the citizens of the state and the nation.”

Following the event, Deputy Secretary Scarlett noted: “This land acquisition commitment is pathbreaking. It will benefit the Everglades National Park and all of southern Florida. The Department of the Interior applauds the leadership of the Governor and the State of Florida for taking this momentous action.”

The Department of the Interior manages more than 3.1 million acres of conservation lands in South Florida, including Everglades and Biscayne National Parks, Big Cypress National Preserve and 16 national wildlife refuges, all of which protect habitat found nowhere else.

Preserving these resources for the future involves an aggressive restoration program with State, Federal, Tribal and local government partners and the public. With its partners, the Department is working to improve water quality and restore more natural flows of water to the Everglades, restore habitat and recover endangered species. The Department chairs the intergovernmental South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, which serves as a focal point for the ongoing collaboration necessary to undertake the largest watershed restoration program in the world.

Since 2000, the Department has worked with the State of Florida and its other Federal partners to lay a strong legal foundation to ensure that the water produced by the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is available in sufficient quantities to restore the Everglades, while also providing for other water-related needs in the region.